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ABSTRACT

In 1992, the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) published standards that can be used as guidelines for preparation of bilingual multicultural teachers. A survey of 22 beginning bilingual education teachers, graduates of Texas bilingual teacher education programs, examined their preservice preparation in relation to NABE standards. One-third to one-half of respondents: (1) had not had a college teacher who spoke Spanish; (2) had not been taught an education course in Spanish; (3) had not received adequate training in philosophy, theory, history, and legal issues related to bilingual education; (4) had not received training in state requirements and guidelines for bilingual education; (5) did not understand the nature of bilingualism; (6) did not know how to assess student proficiency in Spanish and English; and (7) had received no training or inadequate training in bilingual teaching methods, Hispanic culture, multicultural issues, or classroom management. As their language-minority population grows, Texas school districts can expect a continued shortage of bilingual teachers. Fewer minorities are passing the entry requirements of teacher education programs, which limits the number of candidates for bilingual education certification. Of those completing bilingual programs, not all possess the competencies needed in the bilingual classroom, increasing the need for inservice staff development. This article contains survey questions and responses and the NABE standards. (SV)

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CREATING EDUCATION THAT WORKS:

BUILDING BILINGUAL TEACHER COMPETENCIES

Frank Gonzales, Ph.D.

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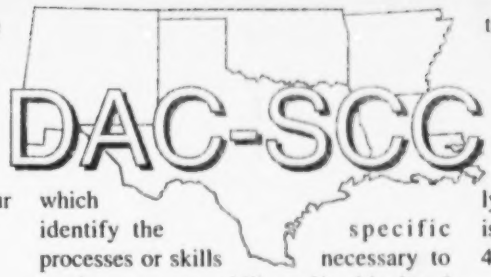
Creating Education That Works:
Building Bilingual Teacher Competencies

Frank Gonzales, Ph.D.

Every school district wants to hire competent teachers. Every school principal wants teachers who have adequate skill in teaching children. And every parent wants their child's teachers to possess the qualities that will inspire their child to succeed. *Everyone* is happy if our teachers are competent.



What is Teacher Competency?

What must the teacher be able to do in order to be considered competent? Moir and Garmston (1992) have developed a continuum of skills, knowledge and attitudes that competent teachers must possess. These include:

- Organizing and managing the classroom (creating a positive learning environment);
- Planning and designing instruction;
- Delivering instruction to all students;
- Demonstrating and evaluating student learning; and
- Participating as members of a learning community.

Each of these competencies grows as the beginning teacher gains experience. Beginning teachers spend four or five years preparing to teach. This pre-professional preparation period occurs in a college or university teacher preparation program which makes certain requirements of the teacher-to-be.

Since 1990, bilingual education teachers in Texas no longer receive a baccalaureate degree in education from a state institution. They are awarded a degree in an area of specialization with a Bilingual Education Endorsement. The endorsement requires twelve hours of coursework and one year of student teaching in a bilingual classroom or twenty-four hours of coursework without the hands-on teaching experience.

In 1992, the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) published *Professional Standards for the Preparation of Bilingual/Multicultural Teachers*. This document identifies six standards which institutions of higher education (IHEs) can use as guidelines in the preparation of bilingual/multicultural teachers (see sidebar on page 5). Under each standard, indicators which identify the specific processes or skills necessary to produce competent bilingual/multicultural teachers are specified.

NABE is to be commended for developing these standards. They are measurements by which bilingual/multicultural teacher preparation programs can assess their readiness to meet the needs of a rapidly changing, diverse student population.

Are IHEs Meeting the Standards?

How well are IHEs preparing bilingual/multicultural teachers according to NABE's Professional Standards? Since I have almost twenty years of experience in bilingual education, my first response to this question would be "reasonably well." However, I decided to validate my perceptions by surveying twenty-two beginning bilingual education teachers in the IDRA Teachers Need Teachers (TNT) program who had recently graduated from bilingual teacher preparation programs in Texas.

The Project TNT
Teacher Competencies Survey

All of the teachers surveyed were in their first year of teaching and had taken the required coursework for the bilingual education endorsement. The questionnaire included indicators under *Standard 3, Bilingual/Multicultural Coursework and Curriculum.* The results are summarized in the table, *Results of the Project TNT Teacher Competencies Survey*, that appears in two parts on pages 6 and 8.

Sixty-six percent (66%) of the beginning teachers had college instructors who were fluent speakers of Spanish. Thirty-four percent (34%) had no college teacher who could speak Spanish. This leads one to conclude that no less than one-third of the bilingually endorsed teachers who graduated last year had no Spanish language role models in their teaching preparation. Of the two-thirds of the teachers who had native language role models only 52% of them were taught education courses in Spanish. Eighty-five percent (85%) of those teaching in Spanish were Mexican American, 15% were non-Hispanic. Only slightly more than half (58%) of the fluent Spanish speakers were in tenured positions while 42% were temporary or part-time faculty.

On the survey questions related to coursework and curriculum, each beginning teacher was asked to indicate whether the coursework contained information on specific topics. The teacher could indicate a definite yes, a definite no, or to some degree (covered, but not adequately).

Only half of the teachers (50%) responded that the philosophy, theory, history and legal issues related to bilingual education were adequately covered. More than one-third (35%) indicated that they had no preparation in those areas, while 15% indicated some preparation. This would lead one to conclude that teacher preparation program faculty members are not aware of the changing demographics of public schools and are training teachers for a school setting of the pre-civil rights era.

Only about a quarter (27%) indicated that state requirements and guidelines for bilingual education had been adequately covered in their coursework. Another quarter (23%) indicated that this topic had been covered to some degree. However, an unbelievable 50% of the beginning teachers had *no* training in Chapter 89 requirements for limited-English-proficient students. These responses would lead to the obvious question, "When, where and how do bilingual educators develop a rationale for what they are hired to do?"

A majority of the teachers responded affirmatively concerning language acquisition and understanding bilingualism. Eighty-two percent (82%) were instructed adequately or to some degree in the nature of language. Slightly more than half (55%) felt that they understood the nature of bilingualism. It is obvious that teacher preparation programs emphasize linguistics as only 10% of respondents had been taught how to assess a students' language proficiency in

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Spanish and English which is the first step in prescribing an appropriate instructional program. Theories and applications of second language teaching was affirmed by 32%, negated by 36% and acknowledged to some degree by 32% of the teachers. Other areas of weakness included validation of the home language (27%) and how to identify structural difference between the two languages (29%). These responses indicate that teacher preparation programs emphasize pedagogical theory rather than the practical application of pedagogy.

The beginning teachers were asked to respond as to whether or not they had been taught how to do certain things that competent bilingual teachers do on a daily basis: only 10% had courses that taught them how to teach reading, language and content area subjects in Spanish; thirty percent (30%) indicated that their coursework covered these topics to some degree; 60%, however, indicated that their coursework contained no instruction in teaching reading, language, or content area material in Spanish.

The responses indicated that the majority of the beginning teachers were exposed to current pedagogical practices: 86% were taught about literacy across the curriculum (whole language); 78% were taught about inquiry discovery learning; 81% were taught about small group instruction (cooperative learning); 78% were taught about learning centers; 43% were taught about individualized instruction and 78% were taught how to use alternative assessment.

The strongest preparation (88%) was in the area of media and A-V materials. In our technological era, only 19% felt competent with computer assisted instruction (CAI), while 48% reported having some degree of familiarity with it. Only one-fourth (24%) of the teachers felt that they had received sufficient in-class management training, while 38% indicated the topic had been covered to some degree. Another 38% received no training in this area. Possible explanations for this may be that they misinterpreted in-class management or had ineffective student teaching experiences.

Multicultural issues did not receive overwhelming affirmation except in topics such as learning styles and Mexican American value systems and beliefs. Just over half (5) of the areas in which questions relating to culture were asked received from 52 to 65 negative responses while the remaining areas (4) received about equal yes, no, and to some degree responses.

Classroom teachers are required to make daily management decisions about their classrooms and what occurs in them. Sixty percent (60%) of the teachers responded affirmatively to receiving classroom management strategies. However, well over half (64%) indicated that they had received no instruction in working effectively with paraprofessionals and no instruction in evaluating and adapting materials for the bilingual classroom (60%), while team teaching and cross-age grouping received a combined 60% rating. These responses tend to reaffirm that the *real* classroom issues that teachers face are not included in most teacher preparation programs.

Are Competent Bilingual Teachers in Short Supply?

Although official estimates vary, more than 7.5 million school-aged children living in the United States have a home language other than English (NABE News, Vol. 14. No. 6, May 1991). By the year 2000, it is estimated that there will be in excess of 10 million school-aged children in this category, an increase of 35%. Diversity in American society will continue to grow well into the twenty-first century. In five states in the southwest, minority children will become the majority of the student population by the year 2000 (Russell & Johnson, 1993). Many of these students will be language minority students who require bilingual education. Texas already has a school age population that is 51% minority. In grades pre-k through 12, 49% of the students are White compared to 34% Hispanic, 12% Black, and 5% other according to the Texas Education Agency 1991-1992 enrollments.

The need for qualified bilingual/multicultural teachers will continue to be a priority for districts with diverse populations. The Association of School, College and University Staffing, Inc. (ASCUS) conducted a nationwide survey of teacher placement officers in 1988. The results showed that the biggest teacher shortages existed in bilingual education, special education, science and mathematics respectively. In Texas, teachers with bilingual education endorsement are in high demand. TEA has issued 2,177 bilingual endorsement in the last five years, approximately 400 per year. TEA projects, however, that approximately 1,200 new bilingual endorsed teachers are needed each year to staff bilingual education classes (Johnson, 1993).

Teacher Competence - continued on page 6

NABE's Professional Standards for Bilingual Teacher Preparation

1. **Institutional Resources, Coordination and Commitment**
   This standard addresses the institution of higher education (IHE)'s rationale, sequence of coursework, field experience, faculty, administrative structure, and assessment of the process as factors that contribute to the production of competent bilingual/multicultural teachers.

2. **Recruitment, Advisement and Retention of Potential Teachers**
   This standard addresses the support services available to potential teachers who have the academic, linguistic, cultural and personal qualification to become bilingual/multicultural educators.

3. **Bilingual/Multicultural Coursework and Curriculum**
   This standard addresses the pre-professional academic preparation process required to develop professional competence in bilingual/multicultural teachers.

4. **Language Proficiency in English/Non-English Languages & Abilities to Teach in Those Languages**
   This standard addresses (1) the recruitment of students who have proficiency in both English and at least one non-English language, (2) the further development of bilingual competency - including fluency in speaking - through coursework, fieldwork and travel opportunities, and (3) the development of English proficiency for those who've complete education programs in other countries and wish to teach in the U.S.

5. **Fieldwork & Practicum Experiences in Bilingual/Multicultural Classrooms**
   This standard addresses the great disparity between theory presented in the college environment and the practical teaching realities in the bilingual/multicultural classroom.

6. **Life-Long Learning & Commitment to Professional Development**
   This standard addresses how teacher preparation programs can provide information to motivate and guide potential educators while extending opportunities and support for continued professional growth.

Teacher Competence - continued from page 5

Conclusions

Although the Project TNT Teacher Competencies Survey was not administered to a random sample of beginning teachers in the state, the teachers surveyed were graduates from five central Texas IHEs. The findings of the survey, then, could be used by IHEs to determine if bilingual education teachers are graduating with the competencies adopted by NABE and to compare their teacher education programs with the indicators in the other five standards.

What do the survey findings mean to the school districts that need bilingual education teachers? Districts can expect a continued shortage of bilingual teachers. Fewer minorities are passing the entry requirements of teacher preparation programs which limits the number of graduating candidates that seek the bilingual education endorsement. Of those completing the program, not all possess the abilities needed to function competently in the bilingual classroom, requiring districts to retool those individuals to make them competent teachers. This means additional staff development for new bilingual teachers, placing additional burdens on teachers trying to survive their first year of teaching as more bilingual teachers will be forced to learn to teach on the job.

Where will this cycle end? Perhaps with a collaborative effort between school districts and IHE teacher preparation programs. Both institutions must change in order to produce competent educators that can teach in our increasingly multicultural and linguistically-diverse society.

Resources

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Results of the Project TNT Teacher Competencies Survey: Part I

Topics/Questions	Responses (by Percentage)		
Did your college program include the following...	**Yes**	**No**	
Instructors who were fluent speakers of Spanish?	66	34	
Spanish-fluent instructors teaching courses in Spanish?	52	48	
Spanish-fluent Mexican American instructors?	85	15	
Spanish-fluent Mexican American instructors in tenured positions?	58	42	
Did your college program cover the following background issues?	**Yes**	**No**	**Some Degree**
Philosophy, theory and history of bilingual education	50	35	15
Legal issues in the education of language minority children	50	35	15
Did your college program cover the following language-related issues?	**Yes**	**No**	**Some Degree**
Assessing student's language proficiency in Spanish and English	10	68	22
Theories and applications of second language teaching	32	36	32
Understanding the nature of language	55	18	27
Understanding the nature of bilingualism	45	45	10
The language variety of the home and the standard variety as valid systems of communication	27	55	18
How to identify and understand structural differences between the child's first and second languages	29	46	25
Did your college program cover the following instructional issues?	**Yes**	**No**	**Some Degree**
How to organize and teach reading/language lessons in Spanish	10	60	30
How to organize and teach content area lessons in Spanish	10	60	30
How to teach literacy across the curriculum	48	14	38
How to direct students in inquiry/discovery learning	38	24	38
How to set up small group instruction	33	19	48
How to manage individualized instruction	33	57	10
How to set up learning centers	48	24	30
How to use alternative assessment	33	24	43
How to use media and audio visual materials	52	15	33
How to use computer technology to assist instruction	19	33	48
How to develop an in-class management system	24	38	38

Results of the Project TNT Teacher Competencies Survey: Part II

Topics/Questions	Responses (by Percentage)		
Did your college program cover the following classroom issues?	**Yes**	**No**	**Some Degree**
Evaluating and adapting materials for the bilingual classroom	18	60	22
Team teaching and cross-age grouping	15	40	45
Effective classroom management strategies	60	22	18
Working effectively with paraprofessionals	32	64	4
Did your college program cover the following multicultural issues?	**Yes**	**No**	**Some Degree**
How to respond positively to the diversity of behavior in a cross-cultural environment	29	33	38
How to develop students' awareness of the value of cultural diversity	38	29	33
How to prepare and assist children to interact successfully in a cross-cultural setting	15	52	23
How to recognize and accept different patterns of child development within and between cultures in order to formulate realistic lesson objectives	10	54	36
How to assist children in maintaining identification with their mother cultures	15	65	20
How to incorporate the culture and history of Hispanics into your instruction	24	52	24
How to incorporate Hispanic lifestyles into your instruction	19	57	24
Mexican American value systems and beliefs	55	32	13
The contributions Hispanics have made to U.S. history and culture	32	34	32
How culture affects learning styles	60	10	30
The developmental levels of children across cultures	32	32	36

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